

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 15-20 are amended. No new matter is added. Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

I. Objection to Claims 15-20

The Office Action objects to claims 15-20 for informalities identified in the Office Action. Claims 15-20 are amended to obviate the objection. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

II. §112 Rejection

The Office Action rejects claims 16-19 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the Applicant regards as the invention.

Claims 15-20 are amended, thereby rendering the rejection moot. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

III. §102 Rejection

The Office Action rejects claims 1-4, 6, 8-11, 13-15 and 18-19 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0074312 to White (“White”). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 recites a method of performing a billing process for the copies or prints produced by a customer of a printing system that includes: “a) in the printing system, accessing the memory to retrieve said product usage data; b) in the printing system,

calculating billing data using the retrieved product usage data; c) in the printing system, presenting a bill to the customer based on said billing data; d) in the printing system, receiving authorization information indicating whether the customer authorizes the billing data; (emphasis added)." As described in the specification at page 1, lines 8-20 and Fig. 1, a "printing system" is defined to include devices such as "electronic reprographic systems, copying machines or electronic printing machines." Nowhere does White disclose or suggest such a feature.

For example, as described at paragraph [0004], [0005] and [0014]-[0017], White is directed to "an electronic transaction recording system [that] accumulat[es] data from printer devices" and that "manages billing policies attributed to each printer device." Features and the use of such an external billing are described in White at least at paragraphs [0021]-[0025] and Fig. 2. The described processes clearly demonstrate that White relies upon network connections between the printer device 12 and the described billing manager 4. Nowhere does White disclose or suggest that the billing manager is integrated within a printer device 12 to, for example, "retrieve . . . product usage data," or "calculate billing data," or "present a bill to the customer," or "receiv[e] authorization information indicating whether the customer authorizes the billing data," as recited in the claims. Rather, White describes a network connected, external billing system that manages and provides billing-based access controls to one or more separate printer devices (12) and that generates billing information externally from the printer.

The original specification, at least at page 2, lines 1-24, and Figures 1-4, addresses such external, network connection based billing systems used with known printers, such as the billing system described by White. For example, as stated in the original specification at page 2, lines 17-24, "as can be seen from FIG. 4, the prior art requires first to send product usage information from the printing system to the billing service, then send a bill from the

billing service to the customer of the printing system, and finally send an authorization from the customer of the printing system to the billing service. Even if these steps were performed electronically, the process is susceptible to errors in each transmission. In case of transmission errors in at least one of the steps, the billing process cannot be reliably performed anymore. Further, it might be necessary to repeat a transmission what might delay the process.”

As described in the original specification at page 4, lines 13 through page 5, line 29, the present application improves the above-described approach by incorporating a billing module within a printer device itself. As described in the original specification at least at page 4, lines 13-27:

Referring now to the drawings and in particular to FIG. 5 which illustrates a printing system according to an embodiment of the present invention, the system differs from that depicted in FIG. 1 in that the controller 500 further comprises a billing module 510. The billing module 510 is a software or hardware component that may be implemented on-board and that allows the system control 130 to control the billing process. Thus, the billing module 510 together with the system control 130 form a billing control unit of the printing system.

That is, the invention allows for generating bills locally by the printer so that there is no need to send product usage information from the printing system to the billing service and to send back a bill from the billing service to the printing system. This can be seen more clearly from FIG. 6 which is an information flow diagram illustrating the process of the invention. Since the bill is generated directly by the printing system, the bill can be authorized before any transmission to the billing service is done. The printing system then sends the authorized billing details to the billing service. (emphasis added.)

For at least the reasons addressed above, independent claim 1 is patentably distinguishable over the applied art. Independent claim 13 includes features similar to those addressed above with respect to claim 1 and is patentably distinguishable over the applied art for at least the same reasons addressed above with respect to claim 1. Claims 2-4, 6, 8-11,

14-15 and 18-19 depend from independent claims 1 and 13, respectively, and are likewise patentably distinguishable over the applied art for at least their dependence on allowable base claims, as well as for additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

IV. §103 Rejections

The Office Action rejects claims 5 and 16 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over White in view of Publication No. 2002/0069168 to Lee et al.; rejects claims 7 and 17 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over White; and rejects claims 12 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over White in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0149661 to Mitchell et al. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

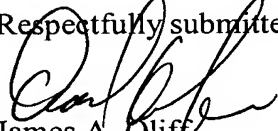
Claims 5, 7, 12, 16, 17 and 20 depend from one of independent claims 1 and 13, respectively. Each of the references identified above fails to overcome the above-described deficiency of White with respect to claims 1 and 13. Therefore, any combinations of the above references do not teach, nor would they have suggested, the combinations of features recited in independent claims 1 and 13.

For at least these reasons, claims 5, 7, 12, 16, 17 and 20 are patentably distinguishable over the applied art for at least the same reasons addressed above with respect to independent claims 1 and 13, as well as for additional features they recite. Withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

V. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-20 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

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Date: February 3, 2006

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